

THE MEXICAN BRANCH

OF

THE CHURCH,

DESCRIBED BY EYE-WITNESSES.

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NEW YORK:

THOMAS WHITTAKER, No. 2 BIBLE HOUSE.



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*Extracts from a Statement prepared by the Rev.
Heman Dyer, D.D., soon after his return from
Mexico.*

IN 1865 there commenced in the City of Mexico a religious movement, having reference to the establishment of an independent Mexican Church. This movement was manifestly inspired by the HOLY GHOST and the Word of GOD. For a time it was under the supervision of a former Roman Catholic Presbyter, by the name of Aguilar, and of a layman by the name of Hernandez. The Bible was freely circulated. The Rev. Dr. Riley, then in this country, heard of this work, and had many pamphlets published in the Spanish language, and sent them to Mexico for distribution. The liberal government, then under the Presidency of Benito Juarez, a pure Indian of the Aztec race, sympathized with this movement, and rendered it such support and protection as it could. In 1868 it had made such progress as to justify the sending of a delegate to the United States, to make known to the Christians here its character and its promise. On reaching our city this delegate petitioned Dr. Riley to go himself to Mexico. Accordingly, toward the end of 1868, he left New York, and soon after was actively employed in his new field of labor. By reason of his birth and early training in a Spanish-speaking country, he had great facilities in the prosecution of his work. He was most cordially received by the lovers of a pure Gospel, and rendered very effective service. He continued his labors for a year and a quarter, during which time the movement was organized under the name of the Church of JESUS in Mexico. After this Dr. Riley spent some time in the States, making known and advocating the claims of this enterprise. In 1871 he returned to Mexico, and was soon joined by Manuel Aguas, a very distinguished Presbyter of the Roman Church. They secured and opened the large church

of St. Joseph, and the chapel of the famous church of San Francisco. Under the united labors of these two earnest men, the interest rapidly increased, and extended throughout the city and into the country.

During last summer important documents were received from the laborers in Mexico, and were submitted to the House of Bishops of our Church at their meeting in October. These documents awakened a deep interest, and after discussion were referred to a commission of seven Bishops, who were to consider the whole subject and report at a future meeting. The commission appointed the Right Rev. Bishop Lee, of Delaware, to visit Mexico, and make an examination of the work there. In pursuance of this appointment, the Bishop, accompanied by several friends, went to Mexico the last of January, and remained there until the first of March. During this time seven persons were ordained to the ministry, and about one hundred and thirty were confirmed. The work was found to be much larger and more wide-spread than was anticipated. In the City of Mexico there are two large congregations and one Mission. In the country districts there are thirty-six organized congregations, and many more unorganized. These congregations embrace several thousand attendants, many of whom are communicants.

From the foregoing, it will be seen that a most important work is going on in Mexico to establish a pure branch of the Church of CHRIST in that country.

To aid in strengthening and enlarging this work, the prayers and contributions of Christians are solicited. Funds are needed to sustain the laborers already in the field, to increase the number, to educate young men for the ministry, to establish an orphanage, to repair and open the grand old church of San Francisco, and to print and circulate books and tracts in the Spanish language.

Extracts from an address delivered before the Central Board of the League, in the Chapel of Calvary Church, New York, April 26, 1876, by the Rev. Albert Zabriskie Gray, Rector of "St. Philip's Church in the Highlands."

IN addressing you on the subject of the important work you have so nobly undertaken, I will primarily assume that you are already and thoroughly acquainted with the main historical and actual facts of the movement. What you desire, as I understand, is additional testimony as to the reality and extent of the Reformation in Mexico—and what may be considered its hopes and prospects.

I went to Mexico as a tourist, with rather indefinite ideas as to what was going on there in the way of Church revival, but with the hearty intention of finding out all I could about it in the short prescribed time of my visit.

I cannot but express my increasing regret that I could not remain longer in the country in order to have become more intimately acquainted with the movement both inside and outside of the Capital. I fear indeed my testimony will be of little worth to you as regards details, however much it may impress you with my own decided and cordial convictions.

What did I find, then, on my arrival in the City of Mexico—on inquiring for the "Church of JESUS?" I found a grand cathedral church situated in the most conspicuous, valuable, and attractive part of the city, its situation a means of influence in itself, with an inviting entrance between beds of blooming flowers and tropic shrubbery, and an interior worthy of any of our metropolitan congregations. In short, we may say that the possession of this old historic church of San Francisco would give character to any movement. But as you are aware, this is not all: they

also have another imposing and excellent church building in another part of the city ; besides, I believe, one or two others in not as available a condition. So much for the externals, or rather for the material elements, of the Church movement here.

Now, what of the spiritual part of the people themselves ? We humbly venture to remark that nothing could be more gratifying to the Christian observer, nay, we may add to the tender heart of the LORD Himself, than the character of the congregations seen in these churches of the Mexican Capital. They fairly filled the church, and worshipped with an attention and ardor most beautiful and edifying to behold. They were the poor and the lowly of earth—those to whom and among whom the REDEEMER first came, who first, indeed, constituted the rank and file of the Christian Church. Their singing was one of the most impressive and touching features of worship I have met with in any land.

And now a word as to their Clergy, with several of whom I had the great pleasure of becoming intimately acquainted. My heart glows as it recalls them one by one ! It seems incredible that in so short a time I could have known and loved so well the brethren of another land and tongue. Simple-hearted, lowly-minded, fervent-spirited—their demeanor within the chancel was an example to any communion, and outside was full of Christian sweetness and gentleness and charity. Their Bishop-elect is a man whose every look and word of humility and faith and zeal mark him as a worthy successor to the lowly, yet princely, Apostles of Galilee. And his small band of Clergy seemed to me generally of the same tone ; one of them has been himself a Bishop-elect of the Church of Rome ; another has served as an army officer, which should in itself suffice to answer for his honor, sincerity, and loyalty,

confirmed as it is by his venerable appearance and frank devotion. Others of them are young men, almost too young, it might seem, for such thrilling responsibilities, but apparently with an enthusiasm tempered by discretion and discipline; one or two especially struck me as men for whom, under GOD'S provident grace, the most glowing expectations could be formed.

And now what more shall I say of them or of their holy work? Shall I speak of their schools, which still proclaim the right principles and intentions of education and training? Shall I tell you of the orphanage, where, in a distant and secluded part of the city, alone amid inimical, if not now directly hostile surroundings, a devoted Christian woman is cherishing and elevating a small band of orphans—poor little social waifs, with no man to care for them until “the Church of JESUS” in her Master's spirit took them by the hand, clothed their bodies and warmed their hearts, and is leading them gently into and along the way of life? Could I but take some of those with me, who are anxious to help on the Master's work wherever truly found, to visit that sweet oasis of Christian life and love in semi-heathen Mexico—to look upon those little expressive faces, to listen to their thrilling hymns and to see their crying needs—could I be thus privileged, I feel entirely assured the orphanage of this “Church of JESUS” in the City of Mexico would need no longer to appeal for Christian sympathy and aid.

In presenting to you these somewhat random remarks on the subject of the Mexican Church movement of Reform, some of you may be disposed to ask: Are there no drawbacks in the matter? There are. Funds are needed for the support of the work of the Church. You are aware that the Clergy are poor men, who have sacrificed what little they

had of temporal means and vocation, as well as of social influence and support, in the cause of the Master, JESUS, and His holy Church. Brought up as we are with everything to favor our pure and undefiled Christianity, it is almost impossible here to realize how in that beautiful land a profession of Protestant or truly Catholic faith amounts to almost a complete ostracism—makes a social Pariah of a man. Besides, their congregations, to their glory, as also to their claim upon our Christian hearts, are the poor and lowly of earth, who, if they can keep bread in their children's mouths, the wolf from their own door, are doing well, and who can, therefore, do little for the support of those whom GOD has set spiritually over them. These men, therefore, these gentle-hearted and devoted Clergy, in order to do their great and peculiarly responsible work, must be in some way supported; and I assure you, my dear brethren, they have been doing it hitherto on the pittance we pay our men menials at home.

I can not forbear allusion to the humble and holy spirit of our Mexican brethren toward those who, with a sadly mistaken zeal, have seen fit to persecute them, even "for righteousness' sake."

We have spoken of the pressing demands of this great Mission work—a work so vast, indeed, that in surveying its glorious possibilities, if not probabilities, the Christian eye must pass through central and southern and even tropic zones, till only arrested by the silent seas that bound the further shores of millions lying fast bound in the visible darkness.

Of such work I have sought thus imperfectly to speak to you, believing that, under GOD, you are called to one of the grandest tasks and responsibilities ever committed to His Church.



MANUEL AGUAS,
LATE BISHOP-ELECT OF THE MEXICAN BRANCH OF THE CHURCH

*Extracts from the translation of a letter from
Manuel Aguas.*

MEXICO, *October*, 1871.

I HAVE learned that you take a sincere and practical interest in the propagation of the Gospel in this Republic of Mexico—a nation until now sadly unfortunate—unfortunate because it has not enjoyed the blessings of true religion.

The Lord has, most clearly and signally, blessed the Christian efforts that you have made in our behalf. Let me tell you how: You contributed funds in behalf of Gospel work in this, my native land. Part of these funds were employed in the publication of Christian pamphlets, which were widely distributed here. These publications were the instrumentality that the Lord

selected, in order that I might begin to realize the spiritual blindness in which I found myself. I was a presbyter in the Roman Church, and most anxiously longed for salvation. With all sincerity did I follow the errors of that idolatrous sect, and imagined Protestantism, or true Christianity, was coming to make us, in Mexico, more unfortunate than ever. I, consequently, opposed its doctrines with all my power. I sincerely thought that, in so doing, I did good service to my native land. How unfortunate was I! I knew that Jesus Christ had died for us; but that most precious belief was to me obscured, because from childhood I had been taught, that in order to obtain salvation, besides the merits of the Redeemer, the meritorious works of men were also needed; as if, forsooth, the sacrifice of Calvary was not enough to save the soul that truly trusts in it. Being imbued with these Romish errors, it is not strange that I should oppose and attack true Christianity; that I should frequently declaim against it in the pulpit; that I should go to the confessional in search of a remedy for my spiritual evils; and, as one precipice often leads to another, I prayed to the Virgin Mary and to the saints, and endeavored to gain all the indulgences possible; all which practices offend and tend to dishonor Jesus, our generous Saviour.

As a natural consequence, I had not obtained peace for my soul; and I was truly unfortunate, because I observed with sorrow that, after all I did, my heart remained unconverted and dragged me often into sin.

I was in this sad state when there reached me the pamphlet called "True Liberty." I read it most carefully; and, notwithstanding that I tried to find, in the arsenal of my Romish subtleties, arguments with which to answer the clear reasoning that I found in this publication, a voice within—the voice of my conscience—told me that my answers were not satisfactory, and that perhaps I was in error.

I commenced to reject the errors of Romanism, and dedicated myself to the study of all the Protestant books and pamphlets that I could lay my hands on. I carefully read the History of the Reformation in the Sixteenth Century, by Merle D'Aubigné, and, above all, I commenced to study the Bible, without paying any attention to the Romish notes and interpretations. This study, from the moment that it was accompanied by earnest prayer, led me to true happiness. I commenced to see the light. The Lord had pity on me, and enabled me to clearly understand the great truths of the Gospel.

I first realized that it is false—most false—that salvation is only found in the Roman Church, as the Romanists pretend. But what completely convinced me of the falseness of the Romish system, was the finding that after I distrusted my own natural strength and trusted in Jesus alone, abandoning all other intercessors, and believing that true safety, salvation, and the remedy for our guilt are alone to be found in the sacrifice of Calvary, I felt a great change in my heart; my feelings were different; what formerly pleased me, now was repugnant to me; I felt real and positive sentiments of love and charity towards my brethren—sentiments which before were fictitious and artificial in me; in a word, I found the long-desired peace of my soul. By the grace of the Lord, I was enabled to resist temptations, and passed a quiet, peaceful, and happy life. As I had dedicated several years to the study of medicine, I was able to maintain myself by this profession. In the evening I read the Holy Scriptures to my household, and prayed with them.

Although all this was very agreeable to me, it was not just that I should continue inactive in the Gospel cause. I soon commenced to think that I was in conscience bound to participate with my brethren the happiness I enjoyed, and especially so, as I had much

facility in speaking to multitudes, from my long practice and experience in preaching that I had had while yet a Roman Catholic. I determined to manifest, publicly, that I had separated myself from the Roman Church, and that I had joined the true Church of Jesus. But in order to take this step I found myself laboring under great difficulties, which the devil would fain have me believe to be insurmountable. The idea of poverty from want of a livelihood presented itself to me with all its deformity ; as I was aware that the moment I made such a declaration, the Roman Bishop would excommunicate me, and, as I lived among an essentially fanatic people, I felt sure that not only my patients would abandon me immediately, but that my friends would turn a cold shoulder upon me and also abandon me, and that my life would be menaced, and attacks made against it. These and other considerations entered my mind, and I imagine that Satan augmented them so as to try and swerve me from accomplishing the holy resolution that I had adopted.

Nevertheless, my resolution was unshaken, and I commenced to attend the Provisional Protestant Church, which had been established in a large hall situated in the street of San Juan de Letran. Being short-sighted, I there began to know my dear brother, the Rev. Henry Chauncey Riley, solely by his voice. It filled me with comfort to hear him speak of Jesus and His precious blood ; the liturgy and hymns which the congregation used, enchanted me, as they were full of the pure faith of the primitive Christian ; and I anxiously desired the arrival of Sundays, because, in our church services, I enjoyed delicious moments of peace and joy—Christian emotions that I had never felt in the Roman sect.

I had for some time been thinking how to become personally acquainted with my brother Henry. One night, as I was at one of our churches, I heard my

brother preach with so much valor and faith, that I become quite ashamed of myself, and was filled with a holy envy of that Chilian who, in Mexico, in the midst of the most loathsome idolatry, and surrounded by enemies, presented himself as an intrepid soldier of Jesus, ready to lay down his life for his divine Captain. I then was determined to present myself to him alone, and to give him a fraternal greeting, exclaiming: "We are brothers; our cause is the same; let us unite our efforts, and, strengthened by our adorable Saviour, let us contend for the faith of Jesus, even though we perish in the contest."

Various persons had spoken to my brother Riley about me. I was presented to him by an elderly gentleman, who is a Protestant. We had a long interview, in which we were convinced that we were brothers in the faith; we loved one another; and, since then, we work together unitedly. Our Lord God has deigned to bless our work; for, notwithstanding the intense and furious persecution that the Romanists have raised against me, the number of true Christians is increasing most marvellously in Mexico.

We have opened the church of the former Roman Catholic Convent of San José de Gracia to the public, and a large congregation now attends there. We have established a Christian Association, and also classes for young men who want to study for the ministry. In Central Mexico we have some fifty Christian congregations, and their numbers are increasing rapidly, even among the smaller towns, where our brethren often suffer the most terrible persecutions from the Roman Catholic curates and fanatics. The Romanists have burned the houses of some of our fellow-Christians, wounding men, women, and children, in their efforts to check the progress of the Gospel in Mexico; but, in spite of all their efforts, we have the consolation of knowing that the sacred light of the Gospel, which is

now so brightly shining in my native land, and increasing in splendor every day, will not be darkened, even with all the efforts that our persecutors are making against it.

By this brief account of the progress of the Gospel in Mexico, you can see that we have reason to hope that the Gospel seed already sown here will soon give the best and choicest fruits of holiness.

Allow me to heartily thank you for what you have done in our behalf. Part of your contribution for Mexico was converted into Christian pamphlets, that were widely and effectively circulated here. One of these arrived at my sad dwelling, where I was despairingly suffering because I had not been able to find peace for my soul, finding myself, as I then did, in the darkness of Roman idolatry; but, from the time that I read that Christian pamphlet—little esteemed by the worldly, but most precious to me as containing the Divine Truth—the Lord commenced to lead me, little by little, in a manner at once sweet and powerful, without in the least wounding my free will, until He guided me into the glorious light of faith, where, by the Lord's help, with the Bible in my hand, I have succeeded in making the Roman magnates in this capital tremble with dread and consternation.

By what I have already said, you will clearly understand that these are solemn moments for my native land, as these may have much to do with her future happiness. The admirable religious movement that is now making such rapid progress in this republic, is likely soon to spread the Gospel in its purity far and wide throughout this nation, and lead to a great reformation in the Mexican Church. This reformation is absolutely needed. Our society is divided between "Liberals" and "Conservative Romanists." The "Liberals" have plunged into the dark horrors of infidelity, and are the slaves of their evil inclinations; the

Romanists are the slaves of the tyrant of Rome. In a word, true religion has not been the foundation of our society. The results of this want have been fratricidal wars, insecurity, avarice, poverty, and misery. Scenes of wickedness have been the schools where our Mexican children have been educated.

Such a heart-rending picture ought to fill Christians with sorrow. They ought to ask themselves: "Why should Mexico find itself on the border of a precipice where deepest ruin threatens?"

The answer is a very simple one. Allow me to point it out with frankness, but without meaning to give the slightest offence, for I love you for Jesus Christ's sake. Having made this observation, I must say that all you who compose the true Church of Christ in that country neighboring to ours are partly to blame for our misfortunes. I know that you are true Christians; I know that you send your missionaries to remote parts of the world, where you generously and disinterestedly aid the Gospel work. Why, then, have you for so many years forgotten your brethren, who, by your very side, have been without the bread of the divine word? Why do you allow them to perish, and to sink, day by day, into deeper ignorance and fanaticism? It is well and good that you should exercise your charity with those people to whom you send the light of the Gospel, however distant they may be; but this is no reason why you should leave the Mexicans by your very side in the darkness of idolatry. I am sure that you and your friends will agree with me, that it is necessary to do what is possible, in order that the true faith may be extended throughout this, my native land. If you think on this subject with earnest prayer to God, your consciences will call upon you to fulfil this duty as Christians. God has not in vain bestowed on your wealthy Church, riches, nor in vain has He endowed you with generous hearts.

We are greatly in want of pecuniary aid to defend the Gospel cause in Mexico from our fanatical enemies, among whom are very rich and powerful persons, who spend their money lavishly in publishing newspapers and other publications to try and crush us; who refit churches with splendor, where they maintain "Paulinos," who declaim day and night against us.

In the meanwhile, we who work in the harvest of the Lord are very much checked in our work for want of the necessary resources. With sorrow do we constantly see most promising opportunities that are offered us for doing most precious and important Christian work lost for lack of the needed funds.

For example, we have now the church of San Francisco, a splendid edifice, the first in this city, after the Cathedral, and more central than the latter. It is an immense building, of an elevated and elegant form, where the architect who directed the work realized his daring and magnificent idea. This church is a very convenient one to preach in, as it has no echo and the voice can easily be heard there. This I well know from having preached in it when it was a Roman Catholic church. We are sure that as soon as we can repair and open it for the preaching of the Gospel, it will be filled with a numerous congregation. When shall we be able to do this? We know not. We are collecting funds here to aid in its restoration among our brethren, but most of them are poor and can give but little, and therefore the work of reparation on the said church goes on very slowly. This delay is to us a cause of great sorrow. Will you and your friends aid us so as to push forward this work as quickly as possible? I beseech you to make a generous effort; and as you have already commenced to aid the Christian work in Mexico, I trust that you will continue to help us. We have reason to hope that this Christian

Church established in Mexico will extend its influence throughout all these Latin countries.

We sadly need funds for our Theological Seminary to educate young men for the ministry, and also to enable us to publish Christian pamphlets and a few books.

It is yet time for you and your friends to save this Church. At present, although she is terribly persecuted by the Romanists, she is beautiful and innocent, because she preserves the pure white vesture of the faith in all its purity. This Church is your younger sister, and should have your love and fraternal care, and it is necessary that you should not abandon her, but that you help her with the funds she requires.

MANUEL AGUAS.

Extracts from a Statement prepared by the Right Rev. Alfred Lee, D.D., Bishop of Delaware, after his return from Mexico.

SPIRITUAL light is now breaking upon Mexico, and within the last ten years a movement has been in progress in that Republic, full of promise and hope. Viewed in its origin, nature, and growth, and in connection with the country in which it appeared, it may be considered one of the remarkable movements of the age. It certainly has strong claims upon the attention and sympathy of the lovers of Scriptural truth and pure primitive Christianity. And to none does it appeal more forcibly than to members of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States. Romanism, however deeply rooted in the sacred associations, early prejudices, and social habits of the people, has no longer an undisputed field. A new communion has arisen,

presenting the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ in a widely different aspect, and from small beginnings has been rapidly spreading. Of the origin and history of this infant Church a brief outline will be now presented.

Of this plant, now growing so vigorously, it may be emphatically said, "The Seed was the Word of God." It sprang up from the bosom of the Papal Communion through the silent influence of the Holy Scriptures. When the attempt was made to seat the unfortunate Maximilian upon the throne of Mexico, advantage was taken of the new condition of things to introduce a considerable supply of copies of the Bible in the Spanish tongue. The book found readers. Some of the precious seed fell upon ground prepared by Divine grace for its reception. Among those thus enlightened was a presbyter named Francisco Aguilar. Upon him the reading of the volume produced like effects as upon Luther in the convent of Erfurth. He not only rejoiced in the discovery which was so precious to his own soul, but he longed to extend to others the blessings he had found. By him the first Protestant congregation, for the worship of God in the Spanish tongue and the preaching of the Gospel, was gathered in the City of Mexico. The thought of Aguilar was to establish a Reformed Catholic Church, evangelical in doctrine and assimilated in model and polity to the primitive Apostolic pattern. He began with a little congregation of about fifty persons, which increased steadily under his assiduous labors. But his course was a brief one. His own exertions were exhausting, and persecution, none the less malignant if restrained from actual violence, was exceedingly harassing. Within two years he succumbed, pressing, in his last moments, the Bible to his heart. Among his papers was found the translation of a little volume, in which the right and duty of every man to search the Scriptures was powerfully argued.

This was published by the Rev. H. C. Riley, and proved an effective ally to his work.

The attention of the bereaved flock was directed to a Presbyterian of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States, of American parentage, but of Chilian birth and education, who was ministering in the Spanish tongue to an Episcopal congregation in the city of New York. In view of the admirable fitness of the Rev. Henry C. Riley for the work in Mexico, it is no presumption to recognize the hand of God in this call. It was a startling summons to Mr. Riley, urging him to leave his kindred and congregation for a post of certain danger and uncertain results. After examining all the difficulties and perils involved, Mr. Riley decided to give himself to the work. Constrained by the love of Christ and zeal for the extension of His kingdom, he "counted not his life dear unto himself, and none of these things moved him." He went on his own responsibility and mainly at his own charges. Arriving in Mexico in 1869, he re-collected, as far as practicable, the scattered flock of Aguilar, teaching both publicly and from house to house. He labored not less effectively with his pen, circulating numbers of tracts explanatory of the great doctrines of the Gospel. He soon attracted public attention, and the jealous eyes of the dominant Church watched him with inquisitorial vigilance. A Catholic Society, with a layman for President, was formed with the express object of counteracting his growing influence. But, in spite of opposition, Mr. Riley's hearers multiplied. He obtained from the Government one of the sequestered conventual churches, San José de Gracia, and prepared to transfer thither his services. The rage of his enemies waxed hot. The Romish party, unable to crush him by violence, determined to employ argument. For this purpose they selected one of the most eminent and learned ecclesiastics of the capital, Manuel Aguas, a

Dominican friar, and very popular as a preacher. He examined Mr. Riley's publications with the intention of preparing a refutation. But the Lord led him by a way that he knew not. He was himself vanquished by the power of the truth. "There fell from his eyes as it had been scales." He discovered that he had been all his life in darkness, and that the work he had undertaken to oppose was of the Lord. He sought personal conference with Mr. Riley, and after painful conflict and deep searchings of heart, he joined himself to that which he had been wont to look upon as an odious sect. This open adhesion to the new doctrine was a shock to his former associates not unlike that occasioned by the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. The church of San José de Gracia was about to be occupied by the congregation under Dr. Riley's care. Loud and deep were the threats. What added fuel to the flame was the announcement that the preacher on that occasion would be none other than Manuel Aguas! With Apostolic boldness the converted friar ascended the pulpit, and before an immense audience proclaimed the Gospel. The favoring hand of God averted the danger. Manuel Aguas concluded his sermon without interruption, and went forward with zeal and intrepidity in his new vocation. From that time he was united with Mr. Riley in the oversight of the Church. He was elected its first Bishop, and had every qualification for a leader. Trained in all the learning of the Romish school, and conversant with the system of internal administration, he could speak intelligently upon all the points that came under discussion. Of unblemished character as well as great intellectual powers, he commanded the respect of his bitterest enemies. Embracing the grand verities of the Gospel with simple, child-like faith, and proclaiming them with fervor and eloquence, he attracted large numbers to hear the Word, and had the entire confidence and affection of

the flock to whom he ministered. He seemed, indeed, precisely the man for the arduous and important charge for which he had been selected, "a chosen vessel of the Lord."

The anger and astonishment created among his old associates may be imagined. He was, of course, speedily excommunicated, but his enemies could not, as a former generation would have done, consign him to the tender mercies of the Inquisition. He was challenged to a public disputation. This he gladly accepted, and named as the question for discussion, "Is the Church of Rome guilty of idolatry?" Public expectation was intensely aroused, and on the day appointed thousands wended their way to San José. Great precautions were taken by the friends of Aguas for his safety. It was with difficulty that way was made for him through the dense masses to the platform. But when he arrived, his antagonist did not make his appearance. The Roman authorities had thought better of it, and concluded not to allow the discussion. Their selected theologian, who in good faith had been preparing himself, was sent to a distant place. Aguas was alone. He had the field to himself, and he did not fail to take advantage of the great opportunity. He boldly accused Rome of the sin of idolatry, and sustained the charge by convincing proofs. Strange things were brought to the ears of many of his auditors, and the shock given on that day to the Roman system was a heavy one.

Aguas was busy with his pen as well as in his public ministry. In particular he replied to the sentence of excommunication in a tract, which, for forcible style and keen sarcasm, is worthy to be compared with "The Provincial Letters" of Pascal.

Through the labors of Aguas, Riley, and some faithful helpers, the work prospered greatly, and extended from the capital to neighboring towns and villages,

A simple liturgy was prepared, and proved a very efficient aid in diffusing the principles of the Gospel and building up congregations. Bible-readers, men unversed in scholastic lore, but full of faith and zeal, carried the glad tidings from village to village, experiencing often the same treatment as the first heralds of the cross, but persevering and undismayed. In the City of Mexico an important acquisition was made in the purchase of another of the old conventual churches, San Francisco. This is a magnificent edifice, in which an audience of two thousand might be assembled, with a chapel adjacent capable of accommodating three hundred persons, situated on the principal street of the city. The church is only inferior to the cathedral in dimensions, and of a better style of architecture. It is every way suited to be a centre of mission work. Hitherto the chapel only has been used, but efforts are now made to put the church in repair, and great advantages are anticipated from its use in public worship.

The course of Aguas, like that of Aguilar, was soon terminated. In labors he was most abundant, preaching from twelve to fifteen sermons a week in addition to manifold cares of oversight and pastoral duty. Under these exertions, as well as the harassing effects of persecution and calumny upon a sensitive spirit, his health gave way. In 1872 he rested from his labors. At this time Mr. Riley was absent, having been detained in New York. The infant Church suffered greatly from this sore bereavement. Under these circumstances a petition was forwarded by the Synod of the Church to the House of Bishops of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States, praying them to take measures for conveying to the Church in Mexico the Episcopal office, offering to give guarantees respecting faith and order. This petition was presented to the Bishops in October, 1874, and led to the appointment of a Mexican Commission, con-

sisting of seven Bishops, at whose request the writer visited Mexico for personal examination and conference during the last winter, accompanied by the Rev. H. Dyer, D.D., of New York.

From the beginning the ideal in the minds of the leaders of this movement was a Church purified from Romish errors and corruptions, but retaining the primitive constitution of the Spanish Ante-Nicene Church, and closely allied to the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States. The hope was cherished at the outset of obtaining the adhesion of one of the Mexican Bishops, and thus perpetuating the ministry in the order which they desired, but the way was not then opened. Afterwards, having elected Aguas as their future Bishop, they looked forward to the day when he could be consecrated to his office. Disappointed in this earnest desire, they still waited patiently without resorting to any other mode of ordination. Men who felt themselves called by the Holy Spirit testified to their countrymen the doctrines of Salvation. So far as possible the sacraments were ministered by Dr. Riley and converted presbyters. It was a memorable day, Feb. 24, 1875, when the first ordination in Mexico was held by a Protestant Bishop. The full service of our Church in the Spanish tongue was used, the sermon being preached by the Rev. Dr. Riley. After the service the emotion shown was very touching, the newly-ordained Deacons throwing themselves into each other's arms and weeping for joy. As it was so uncertain when another opportunity would be presented, ordination to the Presbyterate followed a few days after.

The doctrines of the "Church of Jesus" are in accord with the Creeds and Articles of the Protestant Episcopal Church. As in the era of the Reformation, the revulsion from Rome is strong and decided. Papal corruption and oppression are to them fearful realities.

Those who have given up friends and prospects of earthly advantage, and are hazarding their lives in the struggle for a pure faith, are not inclined to compromise with such an enemy. Two doctrines especially hold in their minds the same high position with which they were regarded by the champions of the Reformation—the Holy Scriptures, the standard of faith and practice, and the right of every man to read them under his responsibility to God; and justification by the merits of Jesus Christ, through faith alone.

The rapid increase of the “Church of Jesus” in Mexico is fitted to awaken strong hopes for the future. It counts now (in 1875) over fifty congregations. Many of these are small, but others number from three to four hundred, and in some villages the larger part of the population is embraced. The reformation in morals is in such places very observable. It is safe to reckon that over six thousand souls are at this time under the influence of the Church. An evidence of the extent to which the work has spread was furnished by the visit of delegations from remote congregations, some of whom have traveled many miles.

As in Apostolic days, the converts are largely “the poor of this world rich in faith.” The obloquy encountered, and the worldly sacrifices to be made are great obstacles in the way of persons of high social position. It is “hard for the rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.” The spirit of persecution is none the less bitter because its outward demonstrations are checked by law. There is no reason to doubt that the present Government is sincere in its desire to enforce the laws of toleration, and it succeeds in the capital as well as could be expected. But in remote districts its arm is comparatively weak, while an ignorant and fanatical populace is easily incited to violence. The “Church of Jesus” in Mexico has had its martyrs and confessors. But the spirit of genuine Christi-

anity is shown not only in willingness to suffer and die for Christ, but also in the return of good for evil and blessings for curses. There has been little complaint heard from the suffering Church. Indignities, revilings, and outrages have been patiently borne, and "with well doing they seek to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." Like the early Christians they are assailed by false and odious accusations.

While the evangelist is exposed to obvious dangers from fanatical bigotry, there is not the same risk for the native worker as for the foreigner. The missionary from abroad arouses national and political as well as religious prejudices. And herein is largely the hope and promise of the movement under consideration. It is of Mexican origin, and carried forward by native laborers. Peradventure God in His Providence is thus preparing the way for the extension of the pure Gospel among the millions on this continent speaking the Spanish tongue. We know how inaccessible they have seemed to missionary enterprise. But let a Mexican Church be established, presenting the truth as it is in Jesus, and the light thus enkindled would extend its beams to the Antilles and the Continental Spanish American States. A great company of preachers would go forth, sister churches would spring up, and light-towers be kindled along the Atlantic and Pacific coasts. Nay, it is no extreme supposition that the radiance will extend across the ocean, and that from the countries to which Spain sent her fierce, armed propagandists in the 16th century, may be returned to her the much-needed influences of pure and Apostolic Christianity. Such hopes are not to be put aside as idle dreams, when we see what has already been done. A Reformed Church, numbering more than fifty congregations, and celebrating its worship in grand temples in the very heart of the City of Mexico, has been

gathered within the space of ten years, in the face of virulent prejudice and fanatical opposition.

Surely such a work, opening such prospects, may well cheer the hearts and encourage the hopes of the lovers of truth and holiness.

To our own Church is the appeal for sympathy and aid urgently made, and much depends on the way in which it is received and the response with which it is met. To us the hearts and wishes of that which is in truth the Church of Christ in Mexico, are now turned. We can impart to them gifts that none others can, and gifts upon which they set a high value. We can engage with peculiar advantage in a grand and holy work. "A great door and effectual is opened unto us of the Lord." If it be added, "and there are many adversaries," this is no new experience in the history of Christ's religion.

ALFRED LEE.

APPENDIX.

Since the publication of the foregoing statement in the *Church Review*, October, 1875, a new shape has been given to the Reformation in Mexico by the proceedings of the Mexican Commission and the action of the Bishops of the Protestant Episcopal Church thereupon. The Commission, after very full and earnest consideration of the report made by the visiting Bishop, and the accompanying documents, accepted and approved his report. Among the resolutions adopted were the following:

"*Whereas*, In the opinion of this Commission, there is sufficient evidence of the existence in Mexico of Presbyters and brethren who are Mexican citizens, owing no allegiance to the Government of these United States, but recognizing the Episcopate of this Church, and seeking further organization under its nursing care;

"*Resolved*, That the record of Synodical action,

and other documents laid before us, indicate the provisional organization of a Church in Mexico, which justifies our recognition of such Church under Article X. of our Constitution."

"*Resolved*, That we recognize the fact that said Church has certified to us the election of two Presbyters as Missionary Bishops of said Church by due Synodical action; but finding the testimonials furnished in evidence of said election in some respects less than a full equivalent of the formulated testimonials under which the Episcopate was imparted to our own Church, we hereby respectfully suggest that such testimonials as shall be equivalent thereto be further supplied by the aforesaid Church in Mexico, according to historical forms to be by us sent for their consideration."

The Commission also resolved to lay before the Bishops of the Protestant Episcopal Church a formal Covenant or Articles of Agreement between the Bishops and "The Mexican Branch of the Catholic Church of our Lord Jesus Christ Militant upon Earth" (the title assumed by said Church at its Synodical meeting in August, 1875), in further and definite settlement of relations with said Church in Mexico.

After hearing and discussion of this report, the following action was taken, *nemine contradicente* :

1. "*Resolved*, That the Bishops in Council learn, with deep gratitude to Almighty God, the facts presented in the Report of their Commission, and heartily desire to render fraternal aid in the full settlement of 'The Mexican Branch of the Catholic Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ Militant upon Earth,' in its possession of Scriptural truth and apostolic order."

2. "*Resolved*, That the Bishops in Council by their Commission to be appointed with full authority to represent them (the said Bishop) in conclusive action, agree to the ratification of Articles of Agreement with the Mexican Church aforesaid, duly represented by its

regularly constituted Synodical authority, and the Commission to be appointed for that purpose is hereby empowered to correspond with the representatives of the said Mexican Church in order to the final ratification of the aforesaid Articles of Agreement."

After the adoption of these resolutions, the members of the first Commission were reappointed.

The action of the Bishops was not only in itself most satisfactory to the friends of this infant Church, but eminently gratifying in its cordial unanimity. This important movement has now the avowed sympathy of our Episcopate. While the work is opening wonderfully in Mexico, its advocates here are placed in a new and highly favorable position. What is now needed is such material aid as will insure the carrying forward of its operations, and relieve those at its head from harassing pecuniary anxieties. The native laborers have manifested eminent self-denial, and are content with the scantiest support. Even this has been of late uncertain, and fears have been entertained lest it might be necessary to disband some of the workers, and narrow the field of operations, when the Providence of God seemed to point so clearly to enlargement. Seldom is such an opportunity given to a Church as that which is now extended to us. Earnest, generous embrace of this great opening will tell upon the future of pure Christianity upon this continent in a way that we can scarcely limit.

Let our Church respond with one heart to a call so unwonted and so urgent.

A. LEE.

The League in aid of the Mexican Branch of the Church.

With the cordial approval of the Mexican Commission of Bishops, a "League in aid of the Mexican

Branch of the Church" has been organized to assist in raising the funds needed to continue and extend the Christian work of that branch of the Church.

Contributions—whether large or small—in aid of that work are earnestly solicited, and can be mailed directly to the address of the treasurer of "The League."

The officers of the "League" are :

President : MRS. FORDYCE BARKER, 85 Madison Ave., N. Y.

Vice-President : MISS A. E. TWEDDLE, 107 E. 36th St., N. Y.

Corresponding Secretary : MISS C. A. HAMILTON, 17 West 20th St., New York, U. S.

Recording Secretary : MRS. HEMAN DYER, 32 St. Mark's Place, N. Y.

Treasurer : MISS M. A. STEWART BROWN, 21 West 34th St., N. Y.

Care of MESSRS. BROWN BROTHERS & Co., 59 Wall Street, New York, U. S

*Extracts from a communication from the Bishops
connected with the Mexican Commission.*

The undersigned, placed by the House of Bishops upon the Commission in charge of the relations of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States, with the "Mexican Branch of the Catholic Church of our Lord Jesus Christ militant upon earth," have, in the discharge of duties thus devolved on them, become deeply impressed with the extreme importance of the spiritual movement now going on in the development and organization of the work of their Mexican brethren; and also with the pressing need of the continued liberal assistance of the work by our branch of the Church.

The "nursing care" of our Church is pledged to her infant sister, in the covenant now ratified, under the authorization of the House of Bishops, for the im-

partation to her, in due season, of the gift of the Episcopate. It is our confident trust that our brethren of the Clergy, and of the Laity, will not be wanting on their part, in redeeming the pledge so made. . . .

It rarely falls to the lot of Christians to have so favorable an opportunity of helping forward the Blessed Master's work by contributing freely of their worldly goods.

As firmly maintaining the faith once delivered to the saints, even to the very death; and as faithfully working against the most bitter opposition, and under the deepest discouragements, in the Lord's great harvest, with very manifest tokens of His blessing; we most earnestly commend our sister Church in Mexico to the love and zealous aid of all, of both sexes, and of every station in our own branch of the Church of Christ.

(Signed),

WILLIAM R. WHITTINGHAM, *Chairman.*

ALFRED LEE,

G. T. BEDELL,

WM. BACON STEVENS,

JOHN B. KERFOOT,

A. CLEVELAND COXE,

A. N. LITTLEJOHN,

Members of the Commission.

Rectors of churches are earnestly asked to aid the work of the Church in Mexico by imparting information about it, by encouraging their congregations and Sunday-schools to contribute in its behalf, and by naming committees as branches of the League in their parishes.

Please remember that contributions, even the smallest, can be mailed directly to the address of the treasurer of the "League," and that *immediate* aid is pressingly needed.



P. G. HERNANDEZ.
PRESBYTER OF THE MEXICAN BRANCH OF THE CHURCH.



IGNACIO MARURI.
PRESBYTER OF THE MEXICAN BRANCH OF THE CHURCH.